Claims

1. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:

a) providing apparatus for electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of a nerve;

b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;

c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres of said nerve.

2. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:

a) providing apparatus for stimulating the respiratory centre by electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of a nerve;

b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;

c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres of said nerve and hence stimulate the respiratory centre.

3. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:

a) providing apparatus for electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of the phrenic nerve;

b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;

c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres.

4. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:

a) providing apparatus for stimulating the respiratory centre by electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of the phrenic nerve;

b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;

c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres of the phrenic nerve and hence stimulate the respiratory centre.

5. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:

a) providing apparatus for stimulating the respiratory centre by electrically

stimulating the proprioceptor fibres of the phrenic nerve;

b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;

c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said fibres and hence stimulate the respiratory centre.

6. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 – 4, wherein the afferent fibres are the large mylinated afferent fibres having a diameter in the range of 12 - 20 micrometers

7. The method is claimed in any one of claims 1 – 6, wherein said apparatus is located wholly or partially internally of the patient.

8. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 - 6, wherein said apparatus is located externally upon the patient, and said nerve is stimulated transcutaneously.

9. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, further including the step of providing a sensor in, on, or adjacent the patient; said sensor is adapted to detect the condition to be treated and is arranged to activate said apparatus upon detecting said condition.

10. The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the sensor is selected from the group consisting of:

- a vibration sensor;
- a transvenous lead;
- a sound sensor;
- a thoracic impedence sensor